

National Elk Refuge News – August 21, 2006

Blue Ribbon Winners



Elaine Hamm (left) and Kathie VanWinkle (right) proudly display their award-winning crafts.

Two National Elk Refuge volunteers brought home a total of six blue ribbons and one best-of-division prize from the Teton County Fair last month, receiving the honors for their quilting skills. Kathie VanWinkle and Elaine Hamm took their prizes in the quilting divisions of machine-pieced, child/baby, wall hanging and kitchen accessories.

VanWinkle is no stranger to the sewing machine. A quilting veteran of 30 years, she has inspired several other National Elk Refuge volunteers to follow in her footsteps during her four summers here. In addition to working on her own sewing projects, she teaches classes at the Stitch 'N Time shop in Jackson. Kathie has also organized the Congress quilt show near Wickenburg, Arizona the last two years, an area where she spends her winters.

Elaine Hamm began quilting in 2004, a craft she is now passionate about. This summer is Hamm's second year volunteering for the National Elk Refuge and her first year to submit entries in the Teton County Fair.

VanWinkle and Hamm, along with four other National Elk Refuge volunteers, have formed an informal group they call "The Backporch Quilters," frequently stitching in the back room of the historic Miller House where they each volunteer one day a week. They share their talents with the public, offering quilting demonstrations to the visitors who come to the historic site. "Strip piecing is a quilting technique reminiscent of what was done by our grandmothers and great-grandmothers," explains VanWinkle. "It's how they made use of scraps and leftover material."

On Saturdays and Sundays, the volunteers have strip piecing quilts in various stages on display at the Miller House, allowing visitors to more clearly see the steps required in the project.

The six members of "The Backporch Quilters" have each made a flag banner this summer and plan to make one available for a raffle later this summer. Proceeds from the raffle, sponsored by the Grand Teton Natural History Association, will be used for preservation work at the Miller House. "We're excited that we can use our hobby as a way to benefit the Miller House," explains Gaylia Hudgins, a third-year Refuge volunteer. "It's only fitting that an old-time craft like quilting help restore a house that's full of history."